AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

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AFTER VIOLENCE IN NEW HAVEN —

BUSINESS AS USUAL

THE FOLLOWING IS A PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF A TAPED INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR RAYMOND SHULZE OF ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE HEART OF THE HILL NEIGHBORHOOD --

Saturday, August 19 - My first contact with knowing something unusual was going on - I was driving down Congress Avenue late in the afternoon - there was a crowd around Tony's Lunch - it wasn't until later that I learned that this young fella had been shot - all I saw at that time was the crowd and inquired - it was obvious that people were already becoming tense and a little angry. In thinking back now, some of us were aware of the tension in the community for some time before this. I certainly couldn't say I was expecting anything major to happen as a result of the shooting at Tony's, but it wouldn't have been a surprise either. I went home - I had things to do. People started running up the street - a man from Congress Avenue knocked on my door and told me things had broken loose down there and could I please run down - by this time breaking of windows was going on and all kinds of people were milling around in the street - police were out in some force although at that moment not in formation of any kind - they

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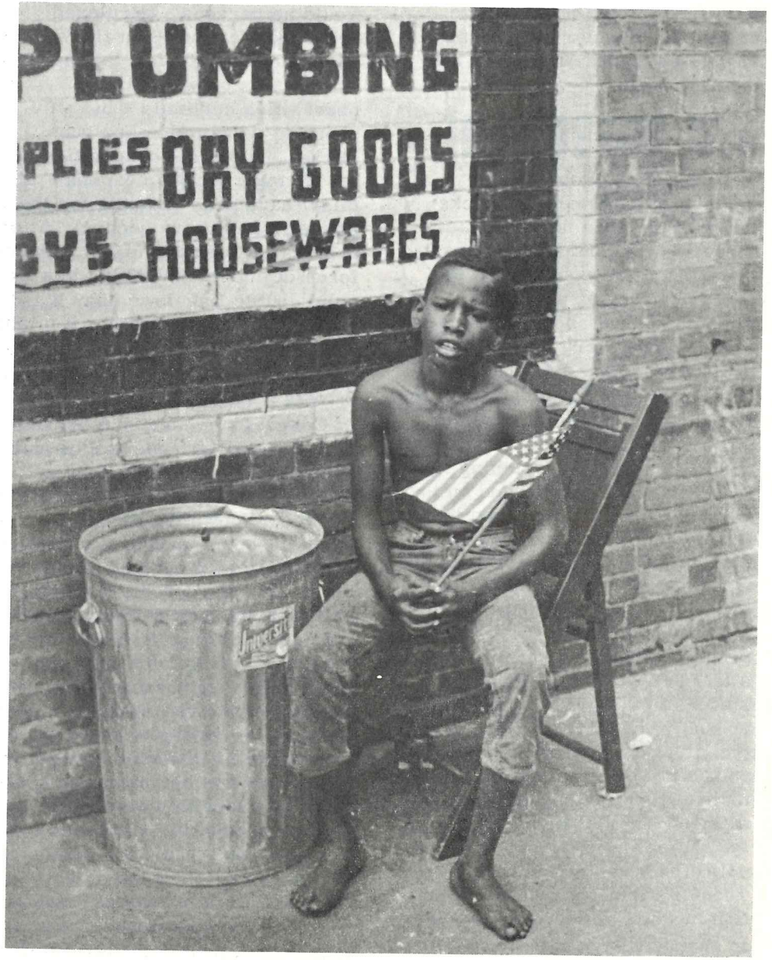

Photo by Dick Balzer

AIM

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To Our Readers

The editors regret the delay in this issue of the AIM Newsletter. We were ready to go to press with a regular issue when the violence erupted. Necessarily, we began work on this special edition. This has been a costly issue for us in expenditure of both time and money. We hope you will respond by contributing to the bond fund for the many people arrested. Regular scheduling of the Newsletter will begin with the next issue. - The Editors

new haven cont.

were standing around in various groups and roadblocks had already gone up in the side streets - you could hear glass breaking - fire equipment was out, I believe, at that point attending a fire above Ciociola's Store - there were all sorts of bystanders along the streets. One musn't get the impression that at this point there was anything more than a great deal of chaos - with a lot of people watching it - standing in the streets and on the sidewalks, on porches, and leaning out of windows. There was a sizable gathering of people on the corner of Congress and Kossuth and a lot of activity in and around the headquarters of Hill Parents - people phoning and running around - a lot of HPA guys, I mean the leaders in the group, were moving around very quickly trying to calm the situation, trying to pull some people back who wanted to exercise their own brand of bravado at the moment - to get them cool - at the same time trying to talk to the police on a variety of subjects. There's certainly no clear situation in which there was somebody in charge on one side and somebody in charge on the other. It was general chaos really on both sides, that is, police and citizenry. There were a good many white people as well as black people in the crowds - it was hard to tell who was a bystander and who wanted to get in on the conversation and the shouting - I didn't see any looting myself - clearly there was some, but I didn't see any - I heard police on the street say at the time that they didn't see a great deal of looting, and I heard the same thing reported early the next morning at the police station - they were wondering if that was also my impression.

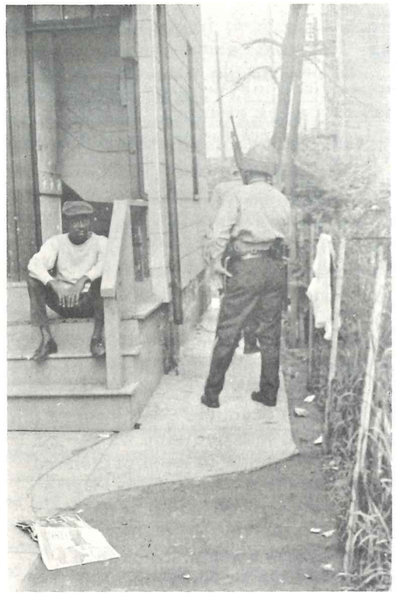
There were a couple of points at which I think the police dropped the ball. Even a well-trained force (I don't know if we have one) would be nervous - perplexed, provoked, fearful - but there was an overly, overly, fearful reaction to what was only shouting - obscenities certainly - but only shouting - the police had guns, sticks, numbers - obscenities roll off the back but not weapons - it might have been possible for the police to feel more secure. At one point later Saturday night, a sizable force of police assembled in a solid double line down near Ward Street or Asylum Street - it might have been part of a general containment action - there were crowds gathering at the other end of Congress Avenue, but broken up into small groups, police and people. At a certain point, a fairly sizable number of young men came down the street - a number about equal to the number of the police, maybe 20 - they came down the street, hollering, half trotting, half walking, calling out, shouting, mixed with laughter, trying to be loud and tough - they approached this double police line - walked right up it - trying to show, "we're not intimidated - we're brave - this is our street." I saw no one with a bottle or weapon of any kind - the men were simply there - the police kept a solid front - they didn't move back - at some point somebody gave the order and cannisters of tear gas - not 1 or 2, but 7 or 8 - were dropped in the group and right

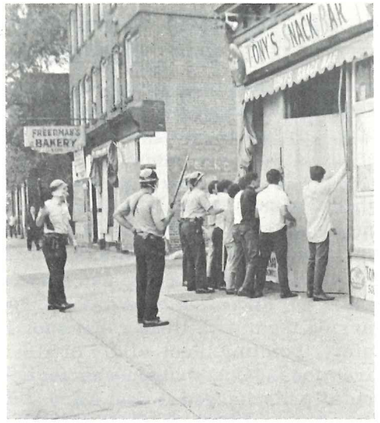
This is a policeman. See his pretty uniform. He is your friend.

in front of the group. The guys began moving back down the street and the police shot more gas and explosives of some kind - like firecrackers - clarly a technique to frighten people.

The police reaction seemed unwarranted, unnecessary to me - these were not armed men - they were just saying things. I say the police dropped the ball because things shifted after that - the guys were no longer just shouting obscenities - now they were terribly angry. Up until now, a lot of people had been trying to calm things down - trying to get order out of chaos - by this time any Negroes who were trying to do this were in a terrible spot - some of the HPA guys were literally grabbing on to other guys to keep them from lunging out at police - these guys got arguments like crazy and they were putting themselves in terrific jeopardy by doing this "Uncle Tom" thing, moving over to the other side - so the more the police did and the more some black guys tried to calm it, the less any black guys were able to be calm.

Fred Harris and Ronnie Johnson were still in communication with the police at this time, particularly2





Photos by Dick Balzer
Police in action in New Haven.

with Jim Ahern. When word of disturbances on Washington Avenue and Cedar Street came in, Fred and Ron went with the police, putting themselves in jeopardy in terms of maintaining leadership with their own guys. On one of these occasions, I think on Washington Avenue, they were actually able to call off the guys - but they went there twice and on the second occasion, I think, Fred reports he was clubbed by a rifle butt in the chest and shot at - I was not there - police have maintained no shots were fired - but when Fred came back he was in great and terrible distress - clearly something did happen - he came back saying, "I've had it helping the police - I'm losing my own guys in helping and then the cops go after me - you can't do nothing - they deserve whatever's going to happen - there's no talking or reasoning with them."

Night wore on - there was more window breaking - another fire - the police were kind of fluid in pulling back and coming in - at some point Fred and Ron went downtown - the word among the guys on the street was "Don't say nothing, don't do nothing until they get back." The police were on one side of the street - the men were on the other side in front of the HPA - guys pulled chairs out of the HPA and benches from the park - occasionally a little knot of guys talked to police - occasionally someone got angry - largely people just sat there pretty much controlled - the word was they were waiting for Fred to get back. When Fred came back he was obviously in a state of great distress - the encounter downtown must have been unsatisfactory - but still there was no overt action by the men standing there.

As Sunday morning wore on, guys were being picked up on a variety of charges - it was the first time wholesale arrests happened on Congress Avenue - a fire started and Fred went into the building to help get the people out - a white lady in a wheel chair was brought down and taken across Congress Avenue - just after this, Fred was arrested - I didn't see it - he reports he had no idea why they grabbed him at this point - Mace was shot into his face - he was subdued and taken away - this didn't become generally known for awhile - things had become quiet - just a few men were standing around - nobody seemed to know where Fred was, which indicated he was arrested some place where a lot of people couldn't see it - when this became known, the group became terribly disturbed - at the same time it was becoming clear that police were arresting anyone who turned his head the wrong way - I was helping some guys in the process of cleaning up - sweeping, putting chairs and benches back in response to the police desire to clear the street - suddenly I was pulled back by police and they grabbed the other guys and arrested them - didn't arrest Ronnie, who was also there on the street helping - or me.

I went downtown when Ronnie heard that Fred was arrested - he was charged with "breach of peace" I think and his bond was set at $200 - but there were no bondsmen around - one bondsman who showed up said "Sure you can get bond if you get me the Statue of Liberty as security" - Rose Harris somehow gathered the bond money from hither and yon, but a public defender stepped in and said he thought he could get Fred off on his own recognizance - Fred was released at about 7:30 Sunday morning - he indicated when he was released that he did not get to make a phone call when he was brought in - he may have gotten to make one at a later time - I don't know - we tried to get the names of the guys who were in jail and to make arrangements to get them out - the police were reluctant to give out the names - we ended up with a list of 8 or 10 names even though there were many more in jail - we were told some were in Station 2 and some were in the State jail on Whalley Avenue.

Through the whole thing, Fred had sponsored a collection of money from people standing around on the street and people working in the HPA for a family that had been burned out above Ciociola's store. He had enough presence of mind even at that time to say "We want to turn all such things over to you." He handed me a paper bag with dimes, quarters, and a few dollar bills - about $20 raised in the midst of the whole business.

About 10:30 Sunday morning, the traffic on Congress Avenue was solid from one end to the other - the street was jammed with people coming to look - there were police at various points on the street with

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WHEELS OF JUSTICE TURN ON ACCUSED

by Robert Gelbach

The white doorman at a downtown hotel was indignant Monday evening as police cars roared between headquarters and the Hill Neighborhood: "I thought the city gave the CIA $32,000 so we wouldn't have any riots this summer," he repeated again and again. Those of us who know the Hill Parents Association can only smile ironically at hearing this organization confused with the national spy agency. What is not so amusing, however, is the assumption of this citizen that the city's support of the HPA summer camp and other HPA programs is some kind of bribe. Actually, the social needs of the Hill area and other troubled neighborhoods in New Haven call for the spending of a hundred times $32,000 in the name of simple justice.

Fortunately there were some white citizens of New Haven whose reaction to the riot this week was more realistic. They generally recognized that not even the HPA could prevent an outbreak which was the product of years of neglect and exploitation of the ghetto. Nor did they expect the HPA to be able to stop the disturbances instantly given the facts that:

(1) Many window breakings and other acts of lawlessness were performed by white toughs who ventured into ghetto neighborhoods looking for trouble. One such group was seen racing down Park Street Sunday evening wielding lead pipes and yelling, "Give us spades, give us spades."

(2) The HPA's efforts were subject to harassment by the state and local police. The mayor alternately sought and rejected help from community people in a surprising display of indecisiveness. To many observers it began to seem that the mayor was unable to keep any promise which required the consent of the police: i.e., he either lacked or refused to exercise control over the police. Fred Harris and others who had been promised freedom of movement to attempt to restore order were nonetheless held virtual prisoner in the HPA office on Sunday night and otherwise restricted on subsequent nights. On Monday, the mayor promised that police would not carry rifles or shotguns, but they did. And often enough they carried them with little regard for safety, pointing them wildly in all directions. One shotgun was accidentally discharged 15 feet away from me inside the police station on Tuesday night. About a dozen policemen and Legal Assistance Association lawyers were within range of the shot of rock salt. One officer was hit slightly in the eye, and several others were stung on their bare arms. The effect of the shot was electric. Policemen dashed about the room, anger in their eyes and faces. Some laughed nervously, others cursed, The recriminations continued for about 10 minutes. In retrospect it does not seem surprising that civilians on the streets react with fear or hostility at the appearance of police with rifles.

Since City officials were little disposed to cooperate with community leaders in ending the disturbance, the efforts of white and blacks alike turned to those tasks which would not require official city support. One major task of this sort was working to identify and release the hundreds of people who had been arrested.

To understand the nature of this task it should be kept in mind that ordinarily when a person is arrested he is held in a cell at police headquarters until he is booked on a formal charge and the amount of his bail is set. If he is questioned, he is entitled to be told that he need not answer any questions. He may usually make a phone call to contact a lawyer or relative. When he is booked a date is set for his appearance in court, at which time a decision will be made to drop the charges or proceed toward a trial. The time between arrest and the first court appearance may be anywhere from a day to a week or more. If the prisoner is not to remain incarcerated during this period, and thereafter until final disposition of his case, someone must arrange to post his bail. This is usually done through a professional bondsman who charges a percentage of the bail bond for the service.

When the disturbances began, it soon became obvious that the number of arrests would overwhelm the ordinary procedure. Somewhere along the line a decision was apparently made to keep prisoners in jail as long as possible. Bails were set incredibly high - on the order of $10,000 or $15,000. One professional bondsman rapidly exhausted the financial backing which he needed to write bonds. Other bondsmen refused to write bonds for fear of tying up their assets for an indeterminable period of time. It was soon apparent that none of the prisoners would be able to post bail bonds with their own resources.

FUNDS ARE BADLY NEEDED FOR BAIL BONDS. This is a very immediate way in which AIM people can help. Please send checks, earmarked as bond money, to AIM, 241 Orange Street, or to the HPA, 662 Congress Avenue.

At this point, the Legal Assistance Association, the Public Defender's Office, and the No-Bail Program began to try to ease the situation. At 6th Circuit Court on Monday, LAA Lawyers began interviewing dozens of prisoners. The police lockup was so crowded that prisoners were soon being transferred to Whalley Avenue Jail, to Fairfield State Jail and Hartford State Jail. The No-Bail Program prepared dozens of motions in the next few days for the release of prisoners on their own recognizance (ROR). Beginning on Monday the Public Defender and the LAA began to request reduction of bail bonds on the grounds that bondsmen were not available. A number of white property owners, most of them from AIM, had offered to pledge

their homes or other properties as security for bail bonds, but since property bonds are required to be twice as high as cash bails, and since bonds were still hovering around $10,000 on felony charges and $2,500 on misdemeanors, it was soon apparent that we would need about a million dollars in unencumbered property to free the defendants.

At this point, on Monday, a strategy was agreed upon between AIM and HPA workers: 1) We would continue to seek property owners willing to pledge their equity on security for bail. (We soon had pledges of nearly $100,000 and the prospect of more.) 2) AIM and HPA workers at the Courthouse and at LAA offices would attempt to gather accurate information on the names of defendants, the charges against them, the amount of their bonds, and the places where they were being held. 3) We would work with LAA, the Public Defender, and the No-Bail Program to have as many people as possible released on ROR. 4) We would attempt to get a general reduction of bails. 5) We would show the list of prisoners to HPA officers and get their recommendations of prisoners whom they knew and could influence to appear in court if they were released on bail.

By Wednesday this system began to click. Lists of prisoners were more complete but still not up to date, bails had been reduced to about a tenth of the original amount in many cases, and the names on our list were not likely to get out on ROR. Eight prisoners had already been released on property bonds and AIM and HPA drivers had picked them up at jail and delivered them home. Suddenly, the courts threw a monkey-wrench in the machinery: they now would require a certificate of title to any property pledged. Formerly a deed or even a tax-bill had been accepted. Now a full title search was required which might take days. The new requirement shocked us all. LAA and Public Defender lawyers sought unsuccessfully to reverse the court ruling.

We realized that many of the prisoners were falsely arrested, that many had jobs which they might lose and families which could not afford to lose a pay check, that some were sick or had been beaten by police and had not been able to get medical attention. We realized more fully than the courts or City officials that resentment in the community over false arrests and the impossibility of locating and freeing prisoners threatened to undermine efforts to bring the disturbance to a halt.

The impasse lasted several hours until a friendly lawyer located a bondsman who was willing to accept property as backing for bonds without a title search. Wednesday night 12 more prisoners were released on his bonds and many more have been freed since. Tens of thousands of dollars in property are involved, and a fee is being charged. Cash donations are needed to cover this fee, since few families of prisoners can afford $100-$150 in fees to bail out a relative. (Contributions can be sent to AIM, 241 Orange Street).

A number of lessons have been learned from the experiences of the last week in trying to free prisoners.

(1) The LAA, Public Defender, and No-Bail Program played a major role in avoiding total chaos, though they were overwhelmed at first. On balance, they deserve the thanks of the community for their round the clock efforts. They do not deserve the attacks made on them by some members of the State Bar Association because they asked for assistance from private lawyers.

(2) Neither the Mayor nor the courts seemed to comprehend the hardships which were produced by the way in which prisoners were handled. Investigations are now underway to determine whether the bondsmen acted improperly in withdrawing from the scene. While everyone else in New Haven put himself on an emergency schedule, the court personnel continued on their 9 to 4 business as usual basis. Judges thought they were being magnanimous by reducing bails from $15,000 to $1,500 when the absence of bondsmen would have dictated a figure closer to $50 or $100 since the total amount in cash had to be posted. In effect, bails were used punitively rather than as a guarantee that defendants would appear in court.

(3) The Mayor's refusal to accept the good offices of the HPA and dozens of community leaders, white and black, placed an intolerable burden on the police. Many instances of police excess, ranging from the ridiculous to the outrageous, can be traced to the fact that they became irritable and unnerved from fatigue as the days wore on. This is no excuse for many incidents which constituted pure racism or brutality by some police. On the other hand, we should not forget that the police were unusually cooperative with the LAA, Public Defender and No-Bail Program lawyers. One lawyer assured me that the judges were far more reactionary than the police.

(4) White citizens whom we contacted were often willing to pledge their property for bail bonds, or to send cash for bondsmen's fees. People responded to appeals from AIM, the Council of Churches, the Human Relations Council and Dixwell Legal Rights Association. AIM and HPA provided coordination for these efforts. Numerous stories reached us concerning families who had lost their homes or experienced other hardships. Contributions of food, clothing, and money were needed for these people, but the Red Cross and other agencies were unavailable. We could be better prepared to aid these people, should there be a recurrence.

(5) Despite efforts by LAA, the Public Defender, and the No-Bail Program, it is clear that legal services for poor people, especially in times of crisis, are woefully inadequate. The greatest problems stem from a bureaucratic court system. Even now, a week after the first incidents, no public agency possesses a complete and accurate list of the persons being held. Each day a new name or two reaches us and the process of locating the prisoners and finding bail funds begins again.

Photo by Dick Balzer

These are children from the Hill waiting to board buses when the HPA organized an evacuation of women and children Tuesday, August 22.

OPEN LETTER TO MAYOR LEE

How are we to react to your statement quoted in the August 20 Register: "I seriously thought it would not happen!" Is our Mayor naive? Does he not know of the plight of the poor? Has he no idea of the violence, disruption, and insecurity that has become a permanent part of a Negro's daily life? Is he unaware of the violence that is daily perpetrated upon the poor by the Redevelopment Agency?

Every major highway in the City has demolished low income areas and has been accompanied by an immense clearance program. The Connector blotted out the Oak Street neighborhood. I-91 smashed through the Negro area of Wooster Square, leaving the people of Farnham Court isolated on one side of the highway with only industry and the unbearable noise of the highway for neighbors. The white property owners of Wooster Square on the other side of the highway have become rich. Did you really not expect the stores on Grand Avenue to be smashed and looted?

The Oak Street, Church Street, and I-91 projects demolished 2,200 dwelling units. Where did all these people move to? Many families were relocated to Dixwell. But there was to be no peace. The Redevelopment Agency moved in with a clearance project, which included Dixwell Avenue, the hub of Negro life in New Haven. The projects that were built - Florence Virtue, Winter Gardens, and Fred Smith Apartments - and the rehabilitated housing were all middle income. This ensured relocation of the poor to another slum.

Mayor Lee, do you know what it is like to be relocated three, four, five times? To be compelled to pay higher rent and deprive your children of food and clothing, to be permanently confined to blighted areas and rat-infested apartments? Do you think the cute off-street parking lots, the parking garages, the highways benefit the poor? Remember also that you stopped building public housing which provides the only decent apartments poor families can afford.

The poor were now concentrated in three areas of the City - in the Hill, Newhallville, and the south part of Dwight between Legion Avenue and Scranton Street. Your army began its final search and destroy operation. Those parts of the City were declared project areas. The Redevelopment Agency announced a 20-acre clearance in the Hill for middle income housing (a few units of public housing were to be included to placate growing dissent) and a huge park that nobody needs, since the West River Park is nearby and still undeveloped. But this might be only the first phase of an immense clearance program that could eventually demolish some 4,000 dwelling units, almost the entire area between Washington and Davenport Avenues.

To facilitate further Negro removal, Route 34 was located through the Negro area of Dwight. This highway is 500 feet wide, over 150 feet wider than the Connector and wider than most of the Connecticut Turnpike. This highway serves only through traffic and should never have been allowed to pass through the City. The land on either side of it will be unusable for residential purposes, and it will isolate the Hill from the rest of New Haven, leaving it, like Farnham Court, pinioned between a highway and the railroad yard.

But this was not the end. You recently proposed to the State Assembly that they finance the construction of a Ring Road through the inner city. This would be a 6-land State highway like Route 34, 400 to 500 feet wide, probably the most expensive stretch of highway built in Connecticut. More Negroes will be displaced from Dixwell. Howe Street, Howard Avenue, and Columbus Avenue will be smashed down. All the main streets out of the City will have to be widened, necessitating demolition of the existing buildings that front these streets. Where will all those living on Columbus, Washington, Congress and Legion Avenues move to? What about those who will be displaced by the parking garages that will have to be built alongside the Ring Road?

The Redevelopment Agency is an invading army. The recent rampage was only a desperate attempt by the poor to demonstrate their plight. Ask yourself, Mayor Lee, what respect you have had for the poor. Your fame rests on violence, violence to the law and order of their lives, to their very right to exist. This violence is as damaging as looting and firebombing. It is worse. It is disrespect for human life. Cont. Next Page

Your priorities have been highways, middle income and luxury housing, and downtown. Highways, stores, and apartments for the rich; for the rich whose sons hide behind student deferments while the poor are drafted to fight in Vietnam; for the rich who own the industries that pollute the air in the city and foul the rivers; for the rich whose beaches are private, whose suburbs and schools are segregated; for the rich who alone have the cash to shop in the new stores downtown.

Mayor Lee, the day of reckoning has come. The children who were 3, 4, and 5 years old in 1954 when you became Mayor have grown up watching their parents' energy and lives being sapped by the insecurity and violence perpetrated by your Redevelopment program. They watched you and your aides become famous and wealthy at the expense of their parents' misery. THEY ARE YOUR PROGENY, MR. MAYOR! YOU BEQUEATHED THEM A LEGACY OF VIOLENCE!

Remember 500,000 American soldiers and an expenditure of over $2 billion a month cannot ensure the safety of people living two miles from Saigon or even the U.S. air bases. All the police and national guard you can muster, all the threat and show of force will never control New Haven. But before it comes to that, why not reassess the Redevelopment program. Stop these insane highways, begin working with and for the people. Stop the ambiguous press releases and phony promises, disband the puppet committees who come to public hearing with speeches prepared by your staff. Appoint another C.A.C. with fewer members from out of town and more spokesmen from the ghettos. Set up new priorities based on reality and not a gradiose vision of a city eroded by highways with a monument to irresponsible government in the center.

It is with regret that we read your statement in the Journal Courier of August 24th: "I don't feel discouraged, nor dejected . . . it won't deter me from continuing the programs we have and if possible intensifying them." It is to be business as usual then - clearance, highways, middle income housing. We beg you to reconsider!

"Criminal statistics show that
most murders are committed
on a Saturday night in August."

Percentages reflect the skeleton of events;
heat and death are measured by degrees.

Is that August being wrung out
like a white sponge in marble tubs
whose owners gently descend
from their saturation point?

And that pair of One Way signs
whose directions collide
in the middle of Columbus Avenue:
is it to keep August traffic from turning
onto Cedar Street some Saturday night?
Detour, and fear not the ghosts
of Oak Street's paved ravines.

During January, February, June, or July
those arrows point to the same collision,
and the same storekept glass yawns
its windows through all seasons.

On Saturday night, the nineteenth
in the process of wringing out August,
Cedar Street hit its fragile limits
(while the marble tubs held their own)
and glass after glass was shattered,
belonging to people in the distance
represented by burglar alarms.

Agents in blue helmets answer the shriek.
Their function finds a victim, barechested in August,
and a force of four lift him limb by limb,
carry him belly to the ground,
playing skin the cat under glass.
They blind passing motorists with danger signals.
He screams: HELP ME! HELP ME!
The radio is louder: "Citizens are advised
to remain at home; the police are well-equipped,
and among their anti-riot weapons is 'apathy mist'."

All curfew night Tuesday and Wednesday,
spotlights flood an inhabited block of Cedar
to stem the tide of aggression.

"NASA announced a plan for a space mirror
which could be orbited to light up
much of South Vietnam at night,
and thus curb guerilla activity."

LawAndOrder sits before the Looking Glass
which says: "You are the fairest of them all."
It cracks when you see the whites of their lies.

- Elizabeth Rose

HPA STATEMENT

Why has an organization that has tried to maintain a public service for all, constantly come under fire from our City fathers?

HPA has tried very hard in light of the recent disturbance to keep open lines of communication between the streets and the City, only to be confronted with, "We don't need your help," and have guns stuck into our faces and told, "This is the only help."

But, in spite of all of these things, HPA has worked nonetheless each night to clear the streets prior to curfew. HPA has helped many innocent victims of police harassment, people whose question is: "Is law and order to help us or to hurt us?" When women and children are in an apartment and a tear gas bomb comes through the window, they don't know.

It seems the city does not realize that occupational forces - meaning their policemen - are not promoting calm but are in fact provoking new incidents. For instance, the smiling officer who violently forced a young man from the steps of City Hall while that same young man was convincing people that if their business was completed they should leave.

Who besides HPA will listen to the complaints of these victims? Who will tell these people that that policeman standing on the street pointing that riot gun at their window is there to help them? Who is to tell the woman and the child shoved into their hallway that that uniformed gentleman is their friend? Who is to tell them their furniture was destroyed in the line of duty? These are the questions we ask downtown and can get no answers for. Who will answer their questions?

You might be asking, "Why did HPA evacuate women and children?"

Do you now see that your law and order is oppressive to these people? Or does that really matter.

Photo by Dick Balzer

A white vigilante in the Hill Sunday night, August 20. Who is concerned about this kind of outside agitator?

HPA has provided what it sees as a great service, but we need help. Who is to help us?

AIM STATEMENT

OR,
THE FAILURE OF THE LIBERALS
(INCLUDING US)

By Robert Cook

"Riots" have been coming to New Haven for a long time. On several weekends last summer, and again this year, rumors of impending trouble spread rapidly around the city. And, of course, we have had the warning of the real thing in many other cities. Still, when it finally happened, no one was really ready.

The mayor and his associates, representing liberals in power, quickly turned the whole thing over to the police. When confronted directly with the militant demands of the people - in Detroit, in Vietnam, or New Haven - the humanitarian veneer of official liberals is exposed as they resort to violent suppression. It is as though the police of New Haven were told to "go get 'em." For most of Saturday night and early Sunday morning, there appeared to be a complete breakdown in control, either by the mayor over the police, or by the police over their own men. With the addition of the State Troopers, and the threat of the National Guard, "order" was restored by an overwhelming show of force. In fact, as in almost every case, the introduction of many more police maintained tension at a high pitch for many days, created incidents where there were none, and contributed greatly to feelings of anger and hostility in the Hill.

The liberals out of power, but aspiring to it, ran around trying to "influence" people, including the mayor, the HPA, the police, and so on. They complained about the "breakdown of communications" and "extremism on both sides." Much like the human relations school of industrial management, they look for a community of interest where there is none, and in refusing to recognize that right is overwhelmingly on the side of the workers, or, in this case, the "rioters," they in fact align themselves with the exploiters and oppressors. However, for these liberals the ability to talk to the powerful is its own reward. Having learned the lessons of Nuremburg, as Julius Lester says, they are making sure that this time no one will be shot without protests being lodged.

Only a handful of ministers and the Council of Churches were able to move beyond this role to one of genuine concern for, and aid to, the victims. They may also have succeeded on Tuesday afternoon, along with the HPA in its evacuation effort, in persuading the State Police that another dramatic sweep of squad cars into the neighborhood could only result in all out war.

A group of whites, including many members of AIM, performed a real service in helping get people out of jail, getting bail money, keeping track of arrests, and so on. While our office, past experience, and organizational ties helped, it must be admitted that AIM efforts were ad hoc, that we were not really prepared. Conceivably, we could have had a plan, trained people, and a bail fund ready for this contingency. We didn't.

Finally, militant elements of AIM talked about more active support for the people of the Hill. The police have always been used to supress the demands of poor people for change, whether those demands take the form of riots, strikes, marches, or sit-ins. That so few people see the similarity of the situation here to Selma, Alabama is due to our own moral blindness. As in Selma, we could have gone and stood between the police and the people of the community. We could recognize, as we did in the South, that the forces which control the community are in fact illegitimate, that their law and order are in fact illegal, and that at bottom their position rests upon force and violence. In this light, the diversion of the police by creating massive traffic jams is less like criminal anarchy and more like the Boston Tea Party.

The question remains - what have we learned, and what will we do if it happens again?

Photo by Dick Balzer

ANGRY YOUNG BLACK MEN SPEAK OUT

"Black unity defeats tokenism. It demands that 20,000 black men be satisfied," said Charles Ashe of the Division of Neighborhood Improvement speaking as one of a forum of ten "Angry Young Black Men" at Lee High School, Monday evening, August 28.

And that's what the meeting was about - a call for the too-long absent black middle class to join with their grass roots brothers of New Haven ghettos in the fight for total freedom. While the meeting was set up before the rebellion of a week ago, it was made more urgent by the fact of that rebellion. An over-flow crowd of 1,000 people (maybe 700 black and 300 white) listened and responded enthusiastically to the words of the ten black men from grass roots organizations throughout the city.

Giggy Martindale of the New Haven Legal Assistance Association and forum moderator opened with, "Brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, friends and enemies - guess that includes everyone - sit back, relax - 'cause we're really gonna sock it to you tonight; you're gonna hear the truth." Speaking to the black middle class who have absented themselves from the grass roots struggle, he said, "How can you find out what's happening in one night? Where were you when things were happening before?" And to the black clergy, "Stop telling people 'JC is coming back - he'll make things all right'.... You've got to put something in the pot. 'Cause the time has come to separate the Uncle Toms from the grass roots people. Stop telling sister to get sanctified, 'cause brother's not satisfied."

Lest we good white folks in AIM are at this point beginning to cluck our tongues over the failure of the middle class black community, we would do well to remember that most of what was addressed at this meeting to those non-involved blacks, can also apply to us. Where have we been during the last 400 years of black oppression? And where were we a week ago when our black brothers needed help we weren't very well prepared to give?

As Joe Harris of Dixwell Legal Rights, another forum speaker, said, "There's a rumor going around that the white man listens, but he don't hear." And he added, "Lot of black men listen and don't hear too." Joe outlined the plan that the meeting was called to announce and discuss - a city-wide, black unity organization of grass

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roots people, bringing in and involving the black middle class. "We're seeking help to help ourselves and there are a lot of people out there that can help us. Don't need no more Uncle Toms - we got enough of them downtown.... They've had their day. Our day's coming up. You can get on the boat and ride with us. You know what happens to the man that can't swim." Referring to the role of whites in this city-wide organization, he said, "You can no longer tell the black man what you can do to make his life better. You're going to have to come and ask him what he wants you to do to make his life better."

Fred Harris, the first speaker, received a standing ovation as he came to the microphone. He first apologized for being nervous because another threat had just been made on his life. Fred spoke to clarify a lot of the charges hurled against him and the HPA in the past week: "HPA didn't start this rebellion. This rebellion started 400 years ago when black people were denied not civil rights, but human rights. We made every effort we could to quiet this thing down. But the news media got ahold of this thing and tried to make it into a game, printing only the parts of speeches that were militant and not saying why they were militant at the time....

"I'm not looking for nothing. I'm not looking for no political position. All I want is for my brothers to walk free....When I can rise and my brothers can rise beside me, then that's rising....

"I speak for no one. I speak for me. The HPA speaks for people and when I speak for the HPA, I have been authorized by that organization and not by myself."

Fred also said something that should give us cause for reflection: "The thing is that black people have no one they can go to and say, 'just stop - just hold back everything that's happening in this city and let's re-evaluate it.'" He said that black people need things stopped to give them time "so we can get our souls together, brothers, 'cause the black man can't go down. He's on the bottom now; he can only go up."

Other speakers at the meeting besides Charlie Ashe, Joe Harris, and Fred Harris were: Benjamin LaFrazier of Narcotics Addiction Research and Community Opportunity (NARCO); Ronald Johnson, Operation Breakthrough; Willie Counsel, HPA vice president; C.B. Covington, formerly with the Legion Center and now with Operation Breakthrough; Edward Grant, head of the Union of Indigent People; George Edwards, a militant spokesman of the streets; and John Barber who was for years head of the New Haven NAACP.

The tone of the meeting was militant. As Willie Counsel said, black men "are getting tired, getting tired of the ghetto - getting frustrated." The audience was very enthusiastic, at many points bursting out in applause and shouts; for example when Willie said, "the police in last week's riot were the Klu Klux Klan only in blue uniforms," and "Any black man here who votes for Dick Lee is an Uncle Tom and a fool."; or when Charlie Ashe recalled a story of Iwojima saying how one man carried the flag until he was shot down, then another man picked it up and carried it a ways until he fell, and then another man grabbed the flag and ran and stuck it on the hill. "That's the way it is with black people in this nation today. Maybe some of us running now will get cut down - like Fred or some of the other men up here - maybe Charlie Ashe won't quite make it, and maybe even my son won't quite make it, but my son's son will!"

Perhaps the most militant speakers were George Edwards and John Barber. George said, "I'm the nigger you gotta worry about....I tried your educational system, and it doesn't comply with what I want in life; I tried your economic system and it doesn't comply; I tried your social system and it doesn't comply with what a man wants in his life. It strips a man of all the dignity he's got!....

"You tell us violence won't work, then hit us over the head to prove it....

"I was in school learning about democracy, and they were slipping it out the back door while I was walking out the front door to get it, and when I got around back it was all gone....

"Everytime we get up here, they yell, 'agitator; the nigger's crazy.' Well if being a man is crazy, this is the craziest nigger living. There's a new day coming and there's only going to be two kinds of people when that day comes - those who are against us and those who are for us."

John started with, "I come here tonight as 'a nigger, an outside agitator, an arsonist, and an inciter to rioter'," a humorous proof of his statement that he was more calm and reasoning than George. "I'm consecrating my life to the eradication of the worst fact in human history - white power." He blasted the use of MACE, a new gas made by the manufacturers of napalm, in the New Haven riots, saying "they used us as guinea pigs!" He pointed out that the New Haven NAACP couldn't even muster a protest against the use of MACE but that the New York NAACP was lodging such a protest. After recounting the mayor's moves in New Haven redevelopment in what John called "The Mayor's Game in the Model City," he finished by saying, "The election process ain't where it's at....The election system is set up so you can express your grievances every two years. Man, we got grievances that have been 350 years in the waiting, and that's why we're going to tell it like it is 365 days a year."

And that's what they did at Lee High School last Monday, "tell it like it is." As Fred Harris said in a press statement released earlier, "There are a lot of things you can do, both blacks and whites Contact the HPA now." (865-0853)

- L. P.

new haven cont.

helmets and drawn guns - rifles or shotguns. I got in touch with the Council of Churches - Rev. Ed Geyer was at the police station - he had talked to the Mayor - he was trying to arrange a meeting - Ronnie and Fred were not anxious to meet with the Mayor at that point - they didn't see what could be accomplished - I talked to residents on the street and to police - I wanted to crack a joke but I couldn't think of one - I went to the HPA - the meeting with the Mayor was being arranged - Ron and Fred were still not too anxious but finally decided they would meet - they were very angry - very steaming.

The meeting was supposed to be at noon or 12:30 - we stood in the City Hall parking lot waiting for 30 to 45 minutes - various people were there - Dick Belford from C.E.O., Milt Brown from C.P.I., Elliot Segal from Redevelopment, Gene McCabe, Rev. Ed. Geyer, Ron, Fred - nobody was getting less tense - finally we went to the basement of the Hall of Records - coffee was waiting - people began filtering in from the Mayor's office - Mel Adams (head of Redevelopment), Dennis Rezendes (aide of the Mayor), and the Mayor himself - it was supposed to be a private meeting - the Mayor asked Fred and Ron who they wanted there, who they didn't, and he acted according to their wishes - at the meeting were Fred, Ron, the Mayor, Adams, Rezendes, Geyer and myself - other people were kept out - the Mayor began by indicating his own personal anguish in these circumstances - he indicated this was the most tragic moment certainly in his career as Mayor and perhaps in his life - he indicated his own anguish, his own personal frustration in terms of what to do - "What do you suggest?" he asked. There was some angry response to that - the feeling was that after certain kinds of police activity the night before, this was a fine time to ask - other kinds of action may have been appropriate last night but were hardly appropriate or even possible now. The Mayor asked if he should go to the street himself - he had thought of doing it the previous night but its value was discounted. Someone suggested that not the previous night but many other times before that might have been the time for him to be there. He asked about today. I answered that I definitely didn't think it would be wise at least the way I sensed emotions and feelings there - Ron and Fred corroborated this. He was willing and apparently wanted to go but didn't - maybe on our advice.

The Mayor asked for some specific suggestions. First the guys wanted him to understand the role they had played the night before - that they had worked as hard as they possibly could in trying to keep people out of the stores - in trying to calm things - that they had rushed over to Cedar and Washington for these reasons - it was really the continued police action that fouled them up - at certain points they and others felt they could have kept things under control. This was countered by Lee who said clearly this wasn't the case - there were many times police were pulled back but there were continued and further provocations - the situation got out of hand and the HPA couldn't control it. The basic attitudes at that time were: the HPA wanted to, tried to, thought that without certain kinds of police moves, they could have controlled it. On the Mayor's side: things were getting out of control in our judgment, and there was absolutely nothing else to do.

The Mayor: "Well, what do you think can be done now that would help?" - silence - finally some things were suggested by Ronnie: what can you do to get some of the people out who were put in jail? - some of the bonds of people they knew seemed to be exceptionally high and couldn't they be gotten out on their own recognizance? The Mayor said he'd do everything possible to help with this situation. We indicated difficulty in getting information. The Mayor said his own word would go out that information should be given to us. The Mayor: do you have the names? No, we don't know who was picked up - can Ron go into the cells and point out who the guys are? The Mayor: yes - he should do that - Lee got Fred Danforth (head of Legal Assistance) in - he asked him to see to it that this took place in an orderly and legal fashion. Shortly after this a typed list of names was given to Ron and he went with Danforth to the station to take care of those on the list and then to look into who else was in jail - Ron left the meeting with that assurance from the Mayor - before he left another suggestion was made that it would be a good idea if the police removed their shotguns - not get rid of them entirely but get them out of sight - trunks of squad cars.

Another suggestion was to pull back some of the police - to cut down the visibility factor of this kind of thing. The Mayor agreed and apparently issued the order immediately that this should take place. The next suggestion was that certain black policemen be put on the street visibly and that authority for the Congress Avenue sector be given to one of them - Fred and Ron suggested who those policemen might be - those who would have the most acceptance on the street because they had the respect of the people - they gave specific names and this was agreed upon. The Mayor gave the order that this should take place. Another agreement was that HPA guys and I should work with these particular policemen, be posted with them and be given responsibility for moving in on people, helping to do whatever was possible to keep order and to cool things off - this was also agreed to. As far as I can remember that was the main content of the meeting - no reference was ever made to the state police.

As we were walking out of the Hall of Records and through the parking lot to the police station to see how things were going with Ron, we saw the state police for the first time - they were walking in carrying what looked to me like large, heavy communications equipment - then it dawned on us that an hour earlier there had been an agreement to remove visible firearms - put in local black police - now we were greeted with the sight of state police - all of us were just shocked - I was

really scared then - I had the feeling at that moment that it was like kind of a declaration of war on the whole community - especially in view of the decisions and agreements made an hour before - if I felt all these emotions running through me, you can imagine what Fred and some of the other people were feeling at this point.

Fred decided to go back to Congress Avenue - not to sleep - because maybe they were actually sending those black policemen over there and this business with the state police didn't mean what it looked like. When we got to Howard and Congress, there were police standing on the corner with rifles exposed - we looked down Congress Avenue and it was clear there was no change in the police situation - it was clear that that agreement hadn't been followed through - both of us felt that our trying to cool anything off now would be absolutely futile - we went home to get a little sleep. I arranged to call Fred and awaken him in an hour or so, at 5:30.

Sunday evening - we made a move when it became clear that our agreement with the Mayor hadn't worked out. The feeling on Congress Avenue was very tense - the state police were out in force - the curfew had been announced - one didn't just suspect it anymore - it was clear that a whole different plan had taken place than the one agreed to at the meeting in the afternoon. The curfew on Sunday night was frightening - all of a sudden there was a platoon of police coming down the street with drawn guns and spotlights flashing up at people's windows - doors being clattered and guys poking in between buildings with guns - 6 cars coming down the street in front of the troops on foot and 5 or 6 cars behind them - if there was anybody in the street up ahead, the shout went out "Get out of here, go on home!" The whole process is a fearsome thing - it just frightens you. I made an attempt to get to the communications center to see the Mayor through Dick Belford - he was sure we could at least get to Mel Adams - Rose Harris was with me - somebody came from the Redevelopment Agency - this wasn't satisfactory to us - we wanted to see either Mel Adams or the Mayor - we went to the Hall of Records - by this time there was a massive communications system there - as we walked in we saw several high ranking officers of the National Guard - this was something we knew nothing about - these guys were in combat boots and full field uniform. We were there pressing in all kinds of ways for about an hour - the Mayor finally agreed to see Rose but none of the others who had been at the earlier meeting - Rose was with the Mayor about 5 minutes - her comment to me after was that the Mayor simply turned away.

A meeting of certain citizens was called for later that night at the Mental Health Center. I was able to move through the curfew - not all clergymen were. People were hungry at the HPA - they hadn't eaten over there in a long time - I called the Mental Health Center because I knew they had a lot of food - we thought of sending a Red Cross truck - but the police wouldn't let anybody through the barricades for any purpose - so I gathered things off our shelves at home and went to the state police command post and told them what I was doing and went in - they permitted it.

The meeting at the Mental Health Center: there was general concern about what had happened that day in terms of the earlier meeting - the things that had been agreed to and then ignored as well as the general concern about too many police, too fast, in too provocative a fashion - what could be done about that - a group was set up to see the Mayor or Mel Adams - Newton Schenck (Chairman of the Board of Education) felt he could arrange it - in the wee hours of the morning a few of us including Schenck, Tom Emerson (Yale Law School), Rabbi Chiel and myself got an audience with Adams, Rezendes, Ahern and other police officers. We reviewed the previous agreements and asked what happened to those things. We again suggested certain kinds of pull backs of police. The group made it clear that if they didn't get a hearing they would go to the press - if they did get a hearing and there was no mediation whatsoever, this group would continue to meet and continue to do whatever it could to get something worked out. We were unsuccessful in everything we asked - we were told "Well, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps tomorrow we can do some of those things - tonight it has to be a matter of police decision" - they were absolutely firm about that.

We went back to the Mental Health Center and decided to call a meeting with the Mayor for early Monday morning - we sent a telegram to the Mayor requesting it - 3 people were waiting at Adams' office when he arrived in the morning. Mel didn't think a meeting with the Mayor was necessary - he didn't think we had any viable suggestions - the Mayor was tired - he was under great duress - couldn't we meet with someone else? what were our points anyway? how could it work? we thought this or that would work before but clearly it didn't. After a half hour of this sort of thing, Mel found out we could meet with the Mayor that afternoon. A message was sent to Rabbi Chiel that only a few people should come, but no one was in a mood to comply - we wanted them to know this was a community feeling and we wanted to have that feeling present - bodies behind that feeling and thinking - about 30 of us went down.

When we got to the meeting room, there already 3 or 4 black clergymen there, who would represent the 'traditional leadership' in New Haven - I don't know how they heard about the meeting. We tried to make clear the purpose of the meeting - Rabbi Chiel indicated that purpose briefly - then Harry Shadden went through a brief history of what had happened at least in the Congress Avenue area on Saturday evening and Sunday - Rose Harris and I brought up the conversation with the Mayor on Sunday - the things that the Mayor had said and promised that had not come about with regard to getting guys out of jail, with regard to the troops, with regard to the use of black police and civilians. The Mayor responded to this by indicating that he had to operate within his own jurisdiction - that first of all, even though he hadn't known this earlier, a good many people had been taken to the Whalley Avenue jail which is under State jurisdiction, outside his jurisdiction - he can only influence what happens at the city jails. At that time it became clear that people had been taken to the Whalley jail so that they could be moved from the state jail to other facilities throughout the state.

We asked about the state police - we mentioned the whole feeling that their presence had produced. Again the Mayor said his hands were tied - that he had the authority to put the state police on alert or at least his okay had to be gotten for that - he said he had seen to it that they were put on the alert but that for them to be called into service was a local police decision - he explained that if the chief of the local police determines that he can no longer control the situation, he can call for the use of state police. We believed the Mayor - he was speaking very very emphatically on the point that it was a matter of police decision. It seemed to me then and seems to me now that even if the Mayor does have technical authority over the police, there's a question as to how successful he can be in using it. That's obviously not a good situation - if the Mayor of the city is saying at points like this, "My hands are tied," where are you? Whose hands aren't tied? Are the police, from some certain point on, completely in charge?

It was clear to me that the Mayor was under far more pressures than the pressures being exerted by the 30 "leading" citizens in this meeting - that he was under pressure from people who ordinarily would be called good citizens and who were certainly in a state of panic and fear - their attitude, their response to what they'd been seeing in the papers or hearing as rumors certainly, to my mind would surely have been, generally, "Get in there and take care of those black people."

Certain specific things came out of the meeting: the announcement from the Mayor that there was going to be a curfew that night - it was clear that there was no negotiation on that point. We asked about the show of weapons - he repeated he had nothing to say about what the state police did - he would see what he could do with city police and mentioned it to Jim Ahern. We asked about a system of identification so that clergy and other civilian personnel, people from neighborhoods, community leaders could have freedom of access - the idea was to have people available to help others who wanted to get home without being picked up for a curfew violation - to help keep people calm in their homes - they had been told to stay away from windows - everyone didn't hear that - what about the Puerto Ricans - some of them didn't know what the word curfew meant - out idea was to help demilitarize the whole appearance of things - at least there would be some civilians moving so people would think there's not just police action here. That was agreeable to the Mayor. 4 or 5 of us stayed to work out the details of an identification system - there were going to be passes with peoples names on them signed by Adams. That never came about - nobody, no civilians were permitted about - there were no passes ever issued - it just didn't happen.

During that meeting, word came in that the black leadership from various communities in New Haven was trying to have a meeting - they weren't permitted assembly on Congress Avenue - where could they meet? Lee High School was suggested but somehow that didn't work out - I gave the use of the parish house - they were moving to develop a united black front - I don't really know what happened at the meeting - the press reported the next morning they were asking for a million dollars - I discovered that wasn't true - what they had said was that it would be a darn good idea to have a million dollar development fund - a loan fund to help with the establishment of black businesses around the city - one little instance of the inaccuracies that appear in the newspapers every day.

Talk about moving people out of the neighborhood didn't begin until after Sunday night when it became clear that whether or not there were more disturbances, police action was going to continue - a lot of people had been evacutating themselves, going to relatives in other parts of the city, since things began, but there was a growing fear of police and vigilante action after Sunday night. Word of this got downtown through the Council of Churches or the Mental Health Center, but it was made clear that no action would be taken by public officials to evacuate people. People were just leaving, going anywhere in any way they could - it wasn't even a matter of sponsoring it - it was already happening. Some moving was done through contacts HPA themselves had and as soon as we got word, we sent it through the Council of Churches to Christian Community Action, which had already been coordinating anything that might have to happen in the way of relief - money, food, clothing, shelter - places for 1500 people were found in the suburbs - a few hundred people did leave.

After Monday, I had no more contact downtown - we continued to work with the clergy - more and more got involved each night - we were concerned about posting clergy at various trouble spots - to talk to the people - to watch - to talk to the police, hoping to keep these guys calm - they were "shot" by this time - who knows how trigger happy. By and large clergy had freedom of access - the curfew was rigidly enforced only in the black communities. On Sunday night and Monday I had stuff to do at the Mental Health Center and downtown - there were people driving and walking throughout the city. This is another psychological factor that was working: there was a curfew over the whole city but anybody could practically go anywhere or do anything if he wasn't in the heart of one of the black communities. Of course, the great fear is vigilantes - white vigilantes in this case. One night after curfew, I saw about 20 white young men outside the Boys Club on Columbus Avenue - the police didn't bother them.

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I Spent a lot of time in the HPA office after curfew - we had assigned 2 clergymen to be in the place at least after curfew if not before to see what was happening - this was also to help make it clear to the general community that there was no "dark plotting" going on behind those doors - there was never any difficulty for white clergymen to be in there at any time - even when they were trying to keep the place clear to get some business done. I might add, I have never been kept out of a meeting at the Hill Parents - at any time - under any circumstances.

The mood on the street changed by Wednesday night - people on Congress Avenue were beginning to be quite light-hearted again - kids were playing horseshoes in the HPA park - people were talking a lot more easily. There wasn't the kind of show of police force - they were there but they were less visible - the curfew wasn't enforced in the same frightening way - the police would holler "Hey Joe, come on, head home" - but they were local police - they still had drawn guns and state police were still around but not as visible -

(This article was drawn from over 40 pages of transcript typed from the taped interview.)